

CHAPTER 3:ADOPTING YOUR WETLAND

ENLISTING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Now that you have become involved with the Indiana Adopt-A-Wetland Program, try to involve citizens in your area, community organizations and local government officials. Members of your community may be curious why you make frequent visits to a local wetland. Take time to educate your community on your involvement in the Indiana Adopt-A-Wetland Program. They may not be aware of how important wetlands are to their quality of life, and how their actions can negatively affect wetlands. Involving them in your stewardship activities will help to spread the word that wetland benefits go beyond landowner boundaries.

Form a local Adopt-A-Wetland Team. This is one of the best ways to ensure you have input on the future of your local wetland. See **Appendix C for an Adopt-A-Wetland Team Check List.**

Things to Remember When Forming A Local Adopt-A-Wetland Team

Recruiting Members

- ✓ Contact those who have shown an interest in the wetland.
- ✓ Talk with neighbors - word of mouth is the best way to generate support for your group.
- ✓ Put sign-up sheets at your community council meeting.
- ✓ Contact local environmental groups.

Identify Members Skills

- ✓ Who is going to be the contact/main organizer?
- ✓ Who is going to research background information on your wetland?
- ✓ Who is going to write letters for public support?
- ✓ Who is going to keep track of public meetings about your wetland?
- ✓ Do any of the members have contacts that might be helpful?
(local officials, politicians, government agency personnel)
- ✓ Do any of the members have media skills?
- ✓ Are any of your members a biologist, a geologist or other scientist?

*Once you have formed a solid membership, set a date and time for periodic/regularly scheduled monthly meetings, and keep to it!

As your community learns more about their local wetlands, interest and investment in wetlands and quality life will increase between those involved, their families and the land. See **Chapter 5: TAKING ACTION** for ideas for involving your community.

FINDING A WETLAND SITE

You may already have a wetland site in mind that you are interested in monitoring, possibly one close to your home or work. If you have not chosen a particular wetland, you may want to look on a map. Wetlands may be found along the margins of rivers or lakes, in upland areas where springs are present, or in lowlands where natural depressions allow water to collect seasonally or year-round. The best maps available that show wetland locations are called National Wetland Inventory Maps (NWI) and are prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. You can obtain copies of the NWI Maps for a small fee from your local Soil and Water Conservation District Office, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources-Map Sales Office at (317)232-4180 or the U.S. Geological Survey at (800)USA-MAPS. Some maps are available in digital format. Check the NWI Internet home page for availability in your area. (Web Address www.nwi.gov)

If you are not ready to locate a wetland site using a map, please review the list of Wetland Site Locations (**See the INDIANA RESOURCE SECTION**). If you were unable to find a conveniently located wetland from the list, talk with local groups who are involved with environmental issues or contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District office (SWCD). They may know of a suitable wetland to monitor.

Useful Maps

- ✓ National Wetland Inventory (NWI) Map
- ✓ U.S.G.S. Topographic Map with watershed boundaries
- ✓ State or county map with wetland locations
- ✓ Local soil survey map (shows hydric soils)
- ✓ FEMA Floodway Maps

GETTING LANDOWNER PERMISSION

Once you have chosen a wetland site, you must determine if the wetland is located on public or private property. Due to the fact that 75 percent of wetlands in the U.S. are located on private property, there is a good chance that some or all of the wetlands in your community are privately owned. If you are having difficulty determining who actually owns the land, contact your local government offices and ask for tax records that show who owns each parcel of land. **Do not, under any circumstances, go onto private property without permission.** Even if the wetland is publicly owned, you should notify public officials of your interest and intentions.

In the Appendix you will find a form titled "Consent For Access To Property". If you are intending to monitor on private property we suggest that you have the landowner sign this document. While the document is not legally binding, it is evidence that the landowner gave you permission to be on his land.

Tips For A Successful Meeting With A Landowner

1. Always arrange to meet with the landowner personally, even if your first contact is by phone or letter.
2. Make a good first impression. Dress neutrally-do not look too casual or too professional.
3. Be an active listener. You need to be conscious of your body language and of the other persons'.
4. Realize that people are different, so you should not interpret everything from your own perspective.
5. Be energetic. Personal enthusiasm is persuasive.
6. Use information, not judgements, when explaining your position. Focus on your concern for the wetland and why, not on what you think the landowner's role in the problem may or may not be. This will help you to be flexible. The landowner will be less defensive and more open to your point of view.
7. Present information objectively. It will help to have statistics or monitoring results to back up what you are saying.
8. Listen to the interest of the landowner and appeal to him/her. Listen to the landowner's points and ask questions to find out his/her interest. Listen and be respectful. This person could make a significant contribution to conservation. Do not judge the landowner or your body language may betray you.
9. The arguments they find persuasive will depend on who they are, how they view the world and their interest. Do not assume what motivates people. You will need to customize your approach for each landowner based on what you have learned about that person.
10. Empower the landowner. Help the landowner find his/her own reasons to participate and let the landowner know he/she can make a valuable difference.
11. If the landowner has reservations about you being on his/her property, do not make assumptions about his/her motivations or become aggressive about that particular wetland.
12. Start a local wetland monitoring effort with a very cooperative landowner. Once other landowners understand the intentions of your efforts by observation, they will be more likely to want to participate. Or start local monitoring efforts on publically -owned land to demonstrate the intent and effectiveness of your efforts.

Adapted by the Izaak Walton League from "Working With People Who Aren't Like You" by Lynn Lozier.

MONITORING WETLANDS SAFELY

There are many things to keep in mind when you visit a wetland. Wetlands are fragile areas. It is important not to disturb them while collecting information. Be extremely careful in the Spring and Summer. These are the seasons that wetlands become home to breeding wildlife species.

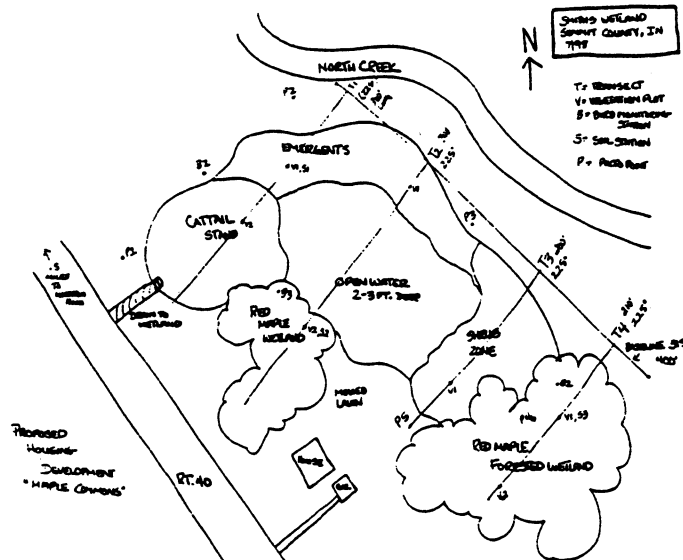
Wetland Safety Rules

- ✓ Always work with someone. Make sure a third party knows the date, time, and location you will be visiting the wetland.
- ✓ Take a first aid kit with you in to the field.
- ✓ Obtain the phone number and location of the medical center nearest to your monitoring site.
- ✓ Find out the location of the closest pay phone or carry a cell phone.
- ✓ Be careful of ticks, snakes, poison ivy, nettles, insects.
 - wear long pants
 - wear old gym shoes or boots
 - bring bug repellent
 - bring medication to subdue allergic reaction (if allergic to bees or spiders)
- ✓ Do not endanger yourself to gather information.
- ✓ Do not drink the water. (bring plenty with you)

MAPPING THE WETLAND

During your first visit to the wetland sketch a map of the area. Choose three (3) observational points. Viewing the wetland from three different perspectives will ensure that your map is comprehensive. Make sure you note these points on your map. On your map draw areas of open water, vegetation types, water in and outflows, **buffer zones** and land use in or adjacent to the wetland.

MASTER MONITORING MAP



Visit your three observational points each time you return to the wetland for monitoring activities. Make additional sketches if you notice seasonal changes or human disturbance.